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ABSTRACT

This address attempts to focus on some of the operational problems encountered in setting up five Child Development Associate Pilot Training Programs in Texas. Areas of concern include: (1) need for a clear statement of roles and responsibilities; (2) need for institutional support and flexibility; (3) recruitment, selection, and initial orientation of trainees; (4) cultural differences between supervisors/trainers and trainees; (5) selection of demonstration sites; and (6) concern for the affective domain in curriculum development. It was emphasized that many problem areas could be more effectively handled if CDA trainers had a greater commitment to competency-based training. (CS)

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THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

What We Are Learning in Texas

By E. Caroline Carroll

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Text of an Address given at the Child Development Associate (CDA) Training Workshop

Sponsored by the Office of Child Development

Silver Spring, Maryland

May 17, 1973

THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

What We Are Learning in Texas

Introduction

In January of 1973, the Texas Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) funded five Child Development Associate (CDA) Pilot Training Programs. After the initial flurry and concern of beginning operations had subsided, program activities have begun to fall into place. The focus of our programs is finally returning to the first word in CDA--CHILD--the most important word in the title. The child is the central concept around which all other CDA issues revolve.

CDA training staff and participants know that they have a clear mandate for children--especially children in day care. The projects in Texas have become increasingly aware that if we are concerned about the child, we must also be concerned about the child care giver. Therefore, the place to begin CDA training is with the trainee and his interpersonal relationships. The CDA must be one who is concerned about the development and education of young children, but more importantly, the CDA must develop a particular concern for the child as a person.

Equally important, the CDA should be a person who is in touch with himself, is aware of his own needs and feelings, is comfortable as a person, and therefore can relate well to others.

CDA staff and participants are beginning to recognize that the most crucial issue for the trainee is to be a whole person himself, so that he can foster these same "whole person" qualities in children--qualities which are compatible with the cultural values which parents desire for their children.

With this perspective in mind, we would like to present some of the operational problems which we have encountered in Texas. It is our hope that by sharing some of our questions, concerns, problems, mistakes and possible solutions, that others will be helped to move more quickly and to avoid some of the pitfalls which we did not foresee.

Institutional Relationships

Our programs are marked by diversity of geographical location and variety of training styles. We have learned that there must be a strong commitment on the part of the training institutions. Deans, chairmen, fiscal agents and other persons in authority who have even a peripheral impact on the program must feel commitment to the concept of competency-based education. Where this is lacking, programs seem to have a variety of problems stemming from lack of support.

(1) A clear statement of roles and responsibilities needs to be spelled out in writing before operations begin. Unfortunately, we still experience confusion because the lines of authority were not clearly delineated, or have not been revised to be more realistic. This problem subsequently affects the CDA trainees.

(2) In Texas, at the time when the contracts were given for CDA training, one of the conditions was that the Department of Home Economics, Early Childhood Education, and other departments which might be involved in the training program, must work together. In many cases, this was the first time that so much direct collaboration in program planning and training had been required. It has had varying degrees of success but we are particularly pleased with those of our institutions whose commitment to this idea is bringing about strong, positive reinforcement of the CDA concept.

(3) Institutions must give an allotment of space for the CDA training program. The CDA program, where it is most successful, tends to be highly individualized, anchored in time and space by a common room where participants may work at their projects at their own rate of speed, where they may come together to share ideas, problem solving, learning, and give general support to one another. This place serves to organize media and materials and serves as an opportunity to share, to be comrades, to develop an esprit de corps.

We are about the business of creating a new profession. Those first persons to become professional CDA's need to be united by friendship, by philosophy, by common commitment. They are the pioneers. No one can say what lies ahead for them. They need to develop strong bonds among themselves so that once they have left the training program, they can continue to share, to support each other and to grow professionally. This will happen only if they have been given an opportunity to be special and to know each other well.

(4) We who are responsible for programs must also be special people--people of depth, wisdom, kindness and courage, in order that we may be an example to those in our projects for they are models to the trainees. The time has come for all individuals and groups concerned with CDA to exemplify the high ideals expected of the Child Development Associate. The time has come for cooperation, for generous minds and willing spirits to work together for the young children of our country who are in group care.

(5) The problem of tuition: in Texas, in order to gain hours of credit from an institution, whether it be in a competency-based program or not, a certain amount of dollars must be paid per hour in order for credit to be placed on a transcript. In conjunction with this is the problem of a CDA credential automatically carrying 60 hours of college credit. We welcome and eagerly await help from the National Consortium because for us these two problems are real stumbling blocks.

(6) We have indicated earlier that it is essential to have commitment from peripheral persons in regard to the CDA concept. It is also important in the use of materials. When a program is trying to initiate competency-based training, access to many materials of a wide range and variety are essential. It is crucial to work out some kind of understanding so that materials are available in a room where CDA participants have ready access. Neither their time schedules nor their morale can afford to be spent on time-consuming errands to libraries and other resource centers scattered over the campus.

It particularly saves time and energy for those trainees who, in addition to putting in a half day or full day working with children, have family commitments and in some instances have long distances to drive to receive the academic training which it is not practical or possible to receive at the field sites.

Staff Relations

(1) The field supervisor/trainer is evolving as the key person in the program. This person must be very carefully chosen because the field supervisor's assessment of the trainee as being professionally competent in working with young children gives direction to the kinds of counseling which the trainee receives, the planning of training, particularly in the knowledged-based areas. We have found that the field supervisor/trainer should be given much more freedom to individualize trainees' programs. This is especially true in those instances where the project director is not working in the field and is working only part-time in the development and administration of the CDA program.

(2) We recognize the concerted effort that is being made to break away from traditional modes in training the CDA's. In many instances the regular staff of the institutions are giving of their personal time with no remuneration. Many of them carry heavy class loads of 12 or 15 hours and yet are willing to give of themselves. Because they feel a personal commitment to the idea of competency-based education, they want to be involved in this innovative, exciting training design.

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Let us give a word of caution. It is important that those working with CDA be committed and that their commitment be appreciated, but it is unfair and unrealistic to expect them to travel too far and too widely if their institutions have given them no release time. In Texas, distance is a factor; our trainees understand that it is often necessary for them to come to the institution and they are willing to do so. We need to be realistic that the entire CDA training cannot be given at the field sites.

(3) Another word of caution in regard to staff. All of our people, full time and part-time, are dedicated and committed to this new profession and to those trainees who will become our first CDA's. Since February and March 1973, they have been working extremely hard to make this program succeed, both in the field sites and at the institutions. Their attempts to work individually with trainees and to design materials appropriate for each one has placed great burdens on their energies. Field supervisors/trainers become extremely fatigued. They are burning their candles at both ends because of deep determination to make CDA work. They are putting in exceptionally long hours. The time and effort involved in planning and carrying out this new program is often overwhelming. Beware as you go about your training that you do not kill the creativity of your program and spoil rapport by too much fatigue. Those of our programs which best seem to be managing the overload which commitment brings have written into their programs time for fun things. Time for staff and trainees to do things together as people, i.e., pot luck supper, picnics, an opportunity to go

to a fine restaurant in a metropolitan area, opportunities to use community resources such as museums, libraries, art galleries.

The staff must be happy and whole--so must the trainees. Otherwise the children will suffer and the program will falter. So we caution you--continue to work hard and be committed, but take time for enjoyment and relaxation.

Recruitment, Selection and Initial Orientation of Trainees

(1) Probationary Period: We have found that it would have been wise to establish an understanding with the trainees at the time of entry concerning their acceptance and continuance in the program. We feel that there should be a period of probation during which time their performance with children, their attitudes about children and about themselves, and evidence of commitment to the task of becoming a CDA would be observed. Unfortunately, we have had some trainees who verbalized beautifully but now in the classroom lack "soul" when interacting and responding to children. These trainees have proved to be a disappointment. Likewise, we have had a handful of people who wanted to be educated at state expense but who really did not intend to be professional child care givers. It was necessary to drop these persons from the program. Counseling both of these types of trainees to encourage them to leave the program graciously has placed additional stress on the field supervisors/trainers.

Some of our exemplary programs as an alternative have initiated the practice of contracts with the trainees. We find that this brings an additional commitment and resolves many problems before they occur.

(2) In the recruitment of trainees, the reading level of the trainees was not initially taken into consideration. As a result, there is an added burden on program development. Reading materials must be developed at about a sixth grade reading level and much more reliance must be placed on audio-visual means of gaining information. Often these materials, both printed and audio-visual, must be developed on-site, which is time consuming for field supervisors/trainers. In some programs, tutoring to improve reading has been initiated for those trainees who need this help.

(3) In selection of trainees, some of the Texas training sites have used standardized inventories which are sometimes culturally loaded. Other institutions have designed various crude screening devices. The use of these, as well as interview techniques, for selection of trainees, with written anecdotes, have served as an initial attitudinal inventory. Checklists have also been used to measure improvement at various times in the program. Attempts have been made to observe the CDA applicant with children, whenever this is possible. Recommendations and assessment of trainee appropriateness for acceptance from various persons has been solicited in some cases.

One word about attitude inventories. Those programs giving the attitude inventories have some concerns as to their validity, but those who did not use any have indicated that this probably should have been a part of their initial assessment, even though none of these have been fool proof.

(4) Communication: It is crucial that the field supervisor/trainer have good communication, verbal and non-verbal, with

trainees. Sometimes the supervisor's verbal sophistication baffles the trainees. This lack of awareness on the part of some field supervisors/trainers has been interpreted as insensitivity to the culture and customs of the various trainees. We have also found, unfortunately, some racial and ethnic discrimination. Be alert to this. It is shameful but it is a reality. It is not just the traditional prejudices which exist between white and black. There is also prejudice between Mexican-American and black. These prejudices flow both directions. We hope that by facing this honestly and attempting to deal with it with sensitivity and candor, some of it will disappear. Obviously, it has serious implications for working with children.

(5) Another problem encountered in recruitment is the idea that some trainees gave verbal agreement to working through vacation time. Because there was no written agreement, there are those who are saying they can't, won't or don't want to be involved during the summer but would like to come back in the fall.

(6) There is a question of whether all trainees should be admitted into a program at one time, or on a staggered basis. Again, we have no final judgment on this but at this time, it would seem that those programs who brought their trainees in together, all at one time rather than a staggered enrollment, have had the most success in establishing an esprit de corps. It has been useful in organizing trainees into teams, partnerships, and cluster groups for self-help in learning.

Let us take up again the matter of the contract system: One significant use of this approach has been of great benefit not only to the trainee but also to the demonstration sites as well.At one of our institutions, contracts between training staff and the field site director have promised to bring benefit through technical assistance to the entire staff of the center. Thus, the trainee's role is clearly understood as that of one who is having an important enriching experience, one who brings materials, ideas, concepts of quality care and quality pre-school education to the center for sharing.

This contract system has eliminated to a great degree the jealousies, authority conflicts, and the threat of a lower staff member becoming more informed than the director. We strongly recommend that you give consideration to this approach. It also means that where the trainee is not allowed to demonstrate competency or not permitted enough freedom to grow professionally, the contract makes it easier for the field supervisor to remove the trainee and diplomatically abandon the site. In one instance, where there was no contract of this sort, a trainee who was an aide in a local program, resigned her position, in order to continue on as a CDA, because the person on site was too threatened by her growing ability as a CDA participant. All of these seem like small things and yet we all know emotional bonfires can grow to be forest fires; ill will can be engendered in a community and devastate a program.

Selection of Demonstration Sites

(1) Probably the most difficult task is to secure truly exemplary programs where trainees may find outstanding models of

child care givers/teachers. In Texas, where minimum standards for day care are rather limited, where the level of income of the child care giver is relatively low, our efforts are hampered even more. Likewise, the geography of our state produces a wide variety of training sites. We have insisted that our trainees be exposed, where possible, to the very best in child care. It is sad to say, but, in most instances, we are going to have to create "the very best."

(2) One approach to site selection where it was not possible to find the ideal, has been to take a center and completely renovate the site by repairing toys and equipment, refinishing and repainting. In this case, the facility becomes a lab school where the trainees work together to create an ideal situation. The field supervisors become the modeling agents for the trainees. This approach has met with outstanding success in one of our programs. The supervisors operate on the principle that most of the CDA's will go into situations that are less than ideal and will need to make tactful judgments as to what is wrong and how it can be improved. In these instances the entire staff of the field site not enrolled in the program as CDA's are willing to be paired with a CDA who becomes tutor to share what she is gaining--who becomes, if you will, a change agent. We see this process as most significant.

(3) The use of university laboratory schools has been encouraged in order that trainees have a "yard stick" to measure other programs. It is important for the trainee to see good equipment, to see fine preschool education and a variety

of approaches to working with young children, especially lab schools with good outdoor facilities. Lab schools generally demonstrate how a strong knowledge base of child development training is translated into practice. We are not, however, suggesting that trainees should work in the lab schools; generally this is not possible. What we are suggesting is that they be allowed to observe, to sit down with the lab school teachers whom we have found to be very generous in giving time to our trainees.

(4) Two of our training sites are placing much stress on the use of the outdoors as a classroom. Here carpentry, painting, sand/waterplay, gardening, music and story telling, even book-looking and block building go on outside. The trainees are learning how to create a "soft playground" by using the excellent suggestions of Mrs. Mabel Pitts from the Texas Department of Public Welfare on how to use tires and other objects to create a good play space for children. We consider the outdoor approach to be very significant.

(5) In Texas we have made it an imperative that all trainees be exposed, where possible, to each ethnic, racial and economic group in their locality and that they have ample opportunity to be involved with 3, 4, and 5 year old children on a rotating basis. We see this variety of site placement as an important step in training a CDA to competently work with all children.

Curriculum

We do not wish to imply that we are making any judgment in regard to particular curriculum formats. Simply, we would like to report to you some of the situations.

(1) Balance of curriculum emphases: Behavioral objectives help organize curriculum and program development, but a program which depends too heavily on behavioral objectives could conceivably turn out a person who has skills and knowledge but one who is lacking in deep affective capacity. Therefore, a CDA training program must include a concern for careful training in the affective domain.

(2) Timing in developing curriculum: One group waited before they completely developed their plan before admitting trainees. In other situations, the trainees were admitted and curriculum is evolving with trainees and staff working together on trainee needs or with trainers working alone to develop curriculum as they have time. As always with funded programs, it seems that the need to get started and program development are in conflict.

(3) Trainee input is important. The program must reflect the objectives of the trainees themselves and their choices in regard to learning. For this reason, there must be a variety of materials, good interpersonal relationships between trainer and trainee, including direct input from trainees in helping to prepare and organize resources and materials.

(4) An individualized program is desirable where possible, but it should not exclude opportunities for the trainees to

come together as a group as well as in small clusters because group work provides cross-pollination of ideas. Group work also helps the trainee to move away from egocentric approaches and attitudes and often provides good modeling behavior.

(5) Field supervisors/trainers should have decision-making input as we have stated before. Their intimate knowledge of what is happening in the field sites is invaluable in curriculum program design.

(6) In one of our projects, the field supervisors/trainers attend classes with the trainees in order to monitor academic situations to maintain continuity appropriate to the needs of the trainees. Heavy burdens in regard to curriculum planning are placed on these field supervisors/trainers, who have to work closely in training and counseling to provide the individualized knowledge base needed by the CDA participants.

(7) In some of our projects, because of the locality, training in competencies with children has to be done during the time when children are available; and, in many cases, when children are not available, such as summer vacation and/or evening. While the ideal would be to have a balance of working with children and academic training at all times, this is not always feasible. Children who have been away from their parents all day in a center need to be with them at night and on weekends, rather than being involved in evening and Saturday programs scheduled for CDA training.

(8) At this time, we are not ready to present the format which each of the Texas projects has outlined in curriculum program planning. Much of it is innovative and exciting. From

personal interviews with trainees, we feel they are learning in stimulating and enriching situations.

(9) Some of our institutions are over-eager in attempting to exit a competent CDA. This has brought them to the realization that while the trainee may be very competent in working with young children, the knowledge base needs broadening. As yet there has been no definition of a baseline of knowledge needed to be a competent CDA. Each of our Texas training projects are struggling to establish this baseline. The question of time is important in this area. We are constantly asked about how much time must they spend, how shall they spend it. Shall it be exactly 50% with children and 50% gaining basic knowledge of child development, nutrition, music, appreciation of cultural differences, etc.? Our response has consistently been that this must be determined with the trainee and in consultation with the cooperating teacher.

Program Assessment

We are concerned about assessment of the program in its overall performance, as well as the individual assessment of the trainee. Our attitude is that assessment, evaluation, appraisal--call it what one may--must be viewed and used as a tool for service to the training institution. Obviously when all is said and done, one cannot escape value judgments about what is going on. Indeed, this becomes part of a circle, because as the value judgments are made, teaching and learning can occur again--thus it provides a service to the training program.

Our program assessment is being handled through an information system worked out with our projects and the National Planning Association. Through the system, we obtain trainee review of the program as well as on-site staff review. The process was initiated as of the first of May 1973; and, it would appear that by having the projects help design the information tools, we are getting the kinds of information which are valuable both for our Office of Early Childhood Development, and for individual projects.

Each program is expected to have a portfolio on each trainee in which there is to be self-evaluation, trainer evaluation, cooperating teacher evaluation, check lists on competencies, and other forms of on-going assessment. Some are even considering child evaluation of the trainee. It is hoped that at the time of the National Consortium assessment of the individual, the Consortium instrument, coupled with the material in each trainee's portfolio, will match and complement each other.

Observation/review of the Texas projects are now scheduled three times during the course of the project. We plan to initiate this part of the program in June 1973. The review team will consist of a member of the state planning committee, i.e., representatives of interested and involved state agencies, a project director from one institution, a field supervisor/trainer from a different institution and the state project director. Deans and chairmen from the various departments in the seven institutions will also be invited so that they may have a first-hand opportunity to examine a competency-based program. As a state, Texas is moving in this direction for all teacher training by 1978.

In conclusion, we would like to touch upon a few brief reminders:

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is to be a new professional;

The CDA needs to be comfortable and conversant with all aspects of a child's day from the opening hour to the closing hour at a center;

CDA's have many styles of learning. Trainers have many styles of teaching. These two work together--there must be a careful match of trainee and trainer;

There must be careful training for the trainers;

There must be time for trainees and trainers to share laughter and tears and good times with each other and with the children;

The CDA is a child care giver/teacher. The CDA must be a special person, not only in the eyes of children and parents, but special within.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR TEXAS CDA PILOT TRAINING PROJECTS

Trainee Person enrolled as a participant in a CDA pilot training project.

Field Supervisor/Trainer/Guidance Counselor Member of the staff of a CDA pilot training project responsible for direct supervision of CDA trainees in their field work. This person may or may not also have responsibilities for academic instruction. This person usually spends 100% time on the CDA project.

Project Director The person responsible for the overall direction and supervision of the operation of a CDA training project. Ordinarily this person is not full time.